

SPEECH BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE HAROLD WILSON, M.P.
PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF
GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
AT THE CONFERENCE ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE
AT HELSINKI ON 30 JULY, 1975

As the first speaker at this Conference, I should like to express the hope on behalf of all of us that in years to come the citizens of Europe and North America will look back at this meeting and regard it as a turning-point in our history, a turning-point not only in what we hope to achieve here, but also in marking the developments which have made our meeting possible.

In territorial coverage, in representation at top level of almost every State, large and small, it so far transcends any previous European meeting, that it makes the legendary Congress of Vienna of 1814 and the Congress of Berlin of 1878 seen like well-dressed tea parties.

On behalf of all of us I should like to express our thanks to President Kekkonen for his speech of welcome, but more than that for his hospitality and for the untiring efforts of his Government to ensure that our meeting is a success. I should also like to thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his address to us.

/For this Conference

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For this Conference fulfils some of the aims of those who created the United Nations. First, the virtual universality of European representation itself reflects the universality which is the hallmark of UN, and which it is our duty to maintain, whatever the divisions, the ebb and flow of tides of fear, of disagreement, even of hostility and rancour.

But no less our meeting here of European and North American nations, 30 years after the United Nations Charter was proclaimed, inspired by the purposes and principles set out in that Charter.

At the end of a war involving every continent, the signatories of the Charter committed all nations, I quote:

"To practise tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours", and

"To unite our strength to maintain international peace and security."

/Similarly, the decisions

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Similarly, the decisions of 30 years ago are put in a new setting, by our endorsement of the inviolability of frontiers, and the principle that changes in frontiers can be made in accordance with international law, by peaceful means, and by agreement.

We meet in the spirit of détente. It is only because that spirit has informed and inspired the preparatory work that it has been made possible for us to be here.

Détente is indivisible, as in the ultimate, freedom, and peace itself, are indivisible.

We meet here representing different social systems, different political systems. The nations represented here are, each of us severally, and through the powerful and deep-rooted alliances which bind many of us, determined to the uttermost to defend not only our frontiers but our right to live under the political system each of us chooses for himself.

/The preservation of the

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The preservation of the integrity of each of us is
the key to the future of all of us.

Détente has become possible only because of that
mutual determination.

Détente will be maintained only by the continued
assertion of vigilance, vigilance based on strength,
vigilance based on solidarity. We who meet here today
represent, in many cases, nations who were enemies in
the most devastating war in history. For some, that war
was itself the culmination of centuries of warfare between
the nations involved.

Even after the war some of the nations here were
ranged against one another on either side of what Winston
Churchill characterised as the Iron Curtain, ranged on
either side of the Cold War.

Today we are met on the basis of co-existence, a
co-existence which we must all recognise depends on the
vigilance and solidarity to which I have referred.

/I have sometimes

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I have sometimes found European statesmen chary of using the phrase "peaceful co-existence" because it has been differently defined at different times by different leaders of nations.

I have no hesitation.

When I was the guest of Leonid Brezhnev and Alexei Kosygin in the Kremlin earlier this year I quoted the wise words of my old chief Clem Attlee:

"The only alternative to co-existence is co-death".

Mr Brezhnev will, I hope, not object if I quote the words he used in this context. He said that the Leaders of his country (I quote) "are fully determined to do all in their power to impart an historically irreversible character not only to international détente as such, but also to a real turn towards the long-term, fruitful and mutually beneficial cooperation of states with different social systems on the basis of full equality and mutual respect. That is what we in the Soviet Union mean by peaceful co-existence."

/For 30 years

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For 30 years the differences which have divided us have seemed greater than the European heritage we hold in common. Yet it is upon that heritage that this Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe has been built.

For two years our diplomatic representatives at Geneva have sought to put into words the means by which we can conduct our relationships in new and more civilized fashion, based on mutual respect, understanding and tolerance. I do not pretend that the documents we are about to approve can, in themselves, diminish the tension and insecurity which have affected the peoples as well as the Governments of Europe since the end of the War. But they do represent more than good intentions, more than a desire to set our relations on a new course. They are a moral commitment to be ignored at our mutual peril, and the start of a new chapter in the history of Europe. With the peoples of North America and the Soviet Union, we want to maintain the diversity of European civilisation, but to end its fratricidal divisions and give it a new and better sense of direction.

It is right to say a word about the political developments which have made possible the preparation of this Final Act.

/This Conference

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This Conference was preceded by the agreements reached in 1971 and 1972 between the Federal Republic of Germany and its Eastern neighbours.

Over a century the history of Europe has been intimately bound up with the history of Germany. Since the War the fate of Berlin has been, as it is and will continue to be, a touchstone of the state of relations in Europe. The Treaties, agreements and the arrangements between the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the four powers in Germany have gone far to ease the situation in the heart of Europe. We played our full part in that process and we rejoice at the benefits it has brought.

These benefits must continue to be developed further after this Conference has been concluded. Subject to quadripartite rights and responsibilities, the Government of the United Kingdom considers that the documents emerging from the Conference relate also to Berlin.

/The Final Act of this

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The Final Act of this Conference is not a treaty; nor is it a peace settlement. It does not, and it cannot, affect the status of present frontiers. It does not, and cannot, in any way affect Four Power rights and responsibilities relating to Berlin and to Germany as a whole. But it does contain a clear commitment about refraining from the threat or use of force. Within the framework we are establishing, no excuse can henceforth be found for any participating state attempting to prevent any other from exercising its sovereign rights, or to intervene in its internal affairs.

On the mutual honouring and observance of these undertakings, we shall be judged, all of us judged, each of us judged, by our own peoples, by history.

/Inevitably

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Inevitably our discussions and decisions here must reflect the very thorough work done on the military aspects. The confidence-building measures; our modest arrangements for the exchange of observers at military manoeuvres, and for prior notification of those manoeuvres; the work so far done, but regrettably incomplete, on the notification of military movements. On this, we can only hope that when the discussion is resumed in Belgrade in 1977 we shall be able to make further progress.

Some of the Governments here represented are working for agreement in a still more vital area of military understanding, that of force reductions which are the subject of the negotiations in Vienna.

There are those who say that once the new political framework for our future relations has been established, it will be easier to make progress in lowering the level of military confrontation and establishing that more stable relationship in Europe to which all governments participating in the Vienna negotiations are committed. Let us hope that is so. We for our part are determined to make a success of the Vienna negotiations, and hope that the energy which has been put into the conclusions of Geneva may now be put to equally good service by all concerned in Vienna.

/Our work here

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Our work here will be judged not only by the spirit of "Live and Let Live" which this Conference asserts. It will be judged by how that spirit is reflected in the lives of ordinary families, by such issues as the reunification of families, the marriages of citizens of different states, the greater possibilities of travel, by professional exchanges of all kinds, and by better working conditions for our journalists and businessmen.

Détente means little if it is not reflected in the daily lives of our peoples. There is no reason why, in 1975, Europeans should not be allowed to marry whom they want, hear and read what they want, travel abroad when and where they want, meet whom they want. To deny that proposition is a sign not of strength but of weakness.

The test will be how far what we have done becomes a reality, and this also will be one of the subjects for the 1977 assessment, no less than such issues as the military, economic and cultural provisions. From this Conference here in Helsinki onwards these things become part of the permanent agenda of détente.

/What we are

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What we are deciding, then, as a new code of political and human relations within Europe, is of importance to all whom we here represent.

But in a wider sense, what we have achieved, and go on to consolidate, will be judged by history more by our success in extroverting our achievement to a wider world.

Many of us here are members of organisations, within Europe and also going much further afield.

Within Europe we have the European Economic Community whose nine member Governments have made a major contribution to the work of this Conference.

Some of our neighbours for their part belong to other organisations such as EFTA and COMECON, powerfully represented here this week.

But in a broader world setting some here are members of the groupings of non-aligned nations. Some of us are members of the Commonwealth, which includes over 30 nations at every stage of economic development from the richest to the poorest, nations from every continent, nations whose shores are lapped by every one of the world's great oceans. Our achievements will be diminished as a contribution to world history if what we have agreed here is not fruitful in enriching the lives of nations all over the world.

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In the documents which we have approved we have taken a limited forward step on economic co-operation. We need to work more closely together on economic co-operation world wide. This is a particular duty at a time when violent movements in oil prices and in other basic inescapable costs have shaken the economy of the world. They have shaken the structure of economically advanced nations, and brought about a massive increase in unemployment. But for countries who for years have lived on the very margin of starvation, the threat is not to men's jobs only, it is to the lives of hundreds of thousands of people.

Our various intra-European groupings are tackling these problems within their own areas, and many of us are concerned with the efforts to find solutions world-wide.

/I am proud

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I am proud to feel that earlier this year EEC promoted an international programme of benefit to 46 developing countries in Africa, the Pacific and the Caribbean, and is now fully engaged in the energy and commodity dialogues. I should like to see the whole of Europe committed, and as far as this can be secured, committed with a common interest.

The British initiative on commodities, designed to help less developed countries, put forward at the Commonwealth Conference in May, is now being considered with other proposals in the preparatory work for the UN Special Session this autumn, to be followed next year at UNCTAD.

/And in other

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And in other ways what we have resolved in the work of CSCE should not be confined to this continent. For example, take freedom of movement of individuals and families - there has been welcome progress. But I hope that what we have each today committed ourselves to within Europe can apply also to those within our countries who want to go to start a new life outside Europe, whether in the Middle East or elsewhere.

Finally I want us all to seek to spread the concept of détente far more widely. If we are to be frank, détente in Europe, the détente which has been worked out in so statesmanlike a way between the world's two greatest powers, has been brought about and rests on the recognition of a balance of terror, above all in nuclear power.

The détente we assert should be matched by an equal determination to prevent the spread of that nuclear terror over the world.

/Three nations

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Three nations represented here are co-depositaries of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The great majority of countries here have adhered to that Treaty and in so doing have made a direct contribution towards creating the safer world we seek.

To those who have not so far adhered to the Treaty I should simply say that the proliferation of nuclear weapons threatens the security of us all. It is not a question that possession of such weapons confers any special status - it certainly confers awesome responsibilities. And it is certainly the profound hope of all nuclear weapon states here that this burden can eventually be shed through multi-lateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament in which of course it would be essential for China to take part.

Those of us who have these weapons or the capability of working towards them must accept a special responsibility.

/Nuclear energy

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Nuclear energy for peaceful purposes raises some different questions. This is a different, indeed welcome, proliferation, in that an invention deriving from man's ingenuity and resources can be directed to raising living standards all over the world. But even here we have to exert all our talents, all our caution, to see that this kind of proliferation does not imperil our efforts to create a safer world, or carry with it dangers of crossing the threshold from peaceful to warlike use of nuclear power. A universal system of international safeguards would help to keep us on the right side of the threshold.

We need to be particularly careful about the use of nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes and we are glad that the International Atomic Energy Agency has recently set up an advisory group on this important subject.

Upon those of us advanced in nuclear technology lies a paramount responsibility to ensure that the export of nuclear materials and technology is conducted under fair and totally effective safeguards to prevent their diversion to destructive purposes.

/Of deepening concern

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Of deepening concern in the world is the development of horror chemical and biological weapons. On this question Her Majesty's Government in the late 60s took an initiative at the 18-Nation Geneva Conference. We are glad that the Biological Weapons Convention which emerged from that initiative came into force last March. But progress on chemical weapons has been very slow because of the serious and still intractable problem of verification. It is vital that any agreement that can be reached should be totally proof against evasion. I understand that at the Soviet/American talks in Moscow a year ago a joint initiative by those countries was foreshadowed, and I welcomed this.

In the wider context of disarmament, there is considerable support for a World Disarmament Conference. This could provide a forum which might help to speed the halting progress so far made. But, and I emphasise this, the pre-requisite for such a conference is that it must be fully comprehensive, attended by all nuclear powers and that there must be full and adequate preparation through existing international machinery, strengthened as necessary for the purpose.

/Détente

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Détente, "Live and Let Live", the acceptance of the principle that deep political and ideological differences do not mean that we have to live at war or even at enmity one with the other is at the heart of all our hopes for the future of Europe. All of us have the duty of proclaiming this same spirit in the United Nations, and in world-wide discussions on issues which not only divide nations, but threaten the peace of the world. For example, the Middle East, the divisions on race and colour in Africa, the strains of emergency from colonialism in different parts of the world.

What then is it we want to emerge from the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe?

Still more what do we want history to assess as our achievement?

/4 Europe

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- A Europe where its people practise tolerance, live together in peace with one another as good neighbours and unite our strength to maintain international peace and security.
- Undertakings openly proclaimed, openly honoured, and in two years' time assessed, developed and built on at Belgrade.
- Above all the assertion, in all our world relationships, that what we have together deemed as being good for us here, is good for the world; but not asserting this in words only but making it a reality by harnessing all the skill, influence, power and statesmanship of the nations meeting here today.